

Regional and National Association News

Catalysts for Change: The Central Role of Professional Associations¹

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Charles Dickens began *A Tale of Two Cities* by observing: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." In the convulsion of political struggle, amidst the pathology of warring egos that we know as the French Revolution, Dickens saw beyond knavery and injustice to a transcendent human goodness. Though thankfully comfortable in a stable democracy, without stretching our imagination too far, we might claim to live in the best of times and the worst of times today. But that is not what we hear, is it? Even from our own lips, we hear only that it is the worst of times. And the press, which preens its objectivity on every corner and with every interview, reflects our gloom with mercantile slavishness.

So which is it? The worst of times? Or the best and the worst of times?

I will pull no punches here: I like Dickens' view. I find his balanced perspective an accurate, even an inspiring, guide to the turmoil and opportunity that confront the public sector and academe today. As a professor, a department chair and the executive director of a professional association, I take comfort in Dickens' insight. And so should members of state political science associations.

Let us look at the record. There is no denying the problems we face. Budget cuts are grim realities. Faculty and agency lines—much less support resources for travel, supplies, and a modern computerized infrastructure—are scarce commodities or, perhaps, only bitter memories. With their passing went our strategic plans and, more importantly, many of our hopes for the future.

Enrollments are weakening, if not falling already. That means more

than a softening of the student FTE (full-time equivalent) base for university funding; it means, as well, that the supply of qualified professionals for the public sector will tail off before the full benefits of professionalization can be realized.

Our professional community is divided. And we pick at the wounds we have caused each other, like vultures on new meat. That is as sick as it is dysfunctional. Can we not finally admit the complementary importance of theoretical and applied research? The writers of our classics—Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, to name only a few from the distant past—neither locked themselves away from society nor eschewed the practical implications and applications of their works. By what right do we, their unworthy successors, mock their example?

Equally distressing—in a society that boasts freedom of expression as a constitutional right, in a profession where many of our members cling to the idea of tenure in order to secure the unfettered opportunity to teach—is the fact that we see the rise on campus of "politically correct speech." Fear and scorn thrive where fearlessness and collegiality should prevail. Have we forgotten so soon the words of former Harvard University President James B. Conant: "A university is a place where people can disagree without becoming disagreeable"?

And those to whom we are responsible are becoming disillusioned. Last year I related some of the perceived failures of modern education. Johnny can't read. Johnny can't write. Johnny can't count. Johnny can't think critically. Johnny can't find his home on a map, can't understand his own culture, and can't fathom his own history. And,

poor Johnny's parents are stuck with the bill! Is it any wonder that the accountability movement is gaining support nationwide? Is it any wonder that state legislatures are becoming more ready to micro-manage education than ever before?

The public sector does not emerge unscathed from popular scrutiny. Public managers are too often considered wastrels who supervise the incompetent in pursuit of the unaffordable or the undesirable. The rise of ethics commissions and independent prosecutors and the frequency with which tax levies and bond issues are defeated at the polls are indicators of more than economic recession. They point to a decline in trust. Without trust government has no latitude to respond creatively to the problems of tomorrow, much less to the dilemmas of today.

There it is: my catalog of our adversity. Not an exhaustive list, to be sure, but one fearsome enough. In the face of that, how could anyone, save Pollyanna, maintain a thread of optimism? Where are the proverbial best of times?

Right here! Right now! Right in front of us!

Let us look at our own literature. Those who evaluate policy, who study innovation, properly claim that adversity is often the catalyst of change, for in times of adversity there is widespread agreement that something has to be done. Adversity quiets the naysayers too, for there is enough suffering going 'round to bring a rough equality of pain. Tolerance for claims of preference thins, and that erodes the moral support for the cries that we all have heard in the past:

Don't chop my program!
Don't consolidate my agency!

Don't experiment on my kid!
Not in my backyard you don't!

Boiled down, all of this means that the time is ripe for new ideas and new alliances.

American society is action oriented and results driven. Positive action that shows results will be acclaimed and supported. That is our opportunity and that is our challenge. My optimism springs from the confidence I have that we, as professionals acting in concert, can respond constructively. That is why, in my judgment, this is also the best of times.

So how do we move forward? And, more important for our purposes, how does a professional association contribute to that momentum? Let me offer four ideas.

First, we recognize ourselves to be a single community with a common origin and common goals. Whether we are practitioners in the public sector or students of theory and practice in academe, we share a concern with the "authoritative allocation of values for a society." Easton's definition of politics binds us as surely as Lasswell's concern with "who gets what, when and how" or Dahl's trinity, "power, rule and authority." We are, at bottom, about the same things. Division in our ranks serves no purpose other than to feed overweening egos. The luxury of that indulgence belongs to a time well and certainly passed.

Second, we come to one another to share experiences, to discuss problems and to seek solutions. Honest and close interaction is revealing. And what is revealed engenders respect. But more than that, interaction promotes collaborative problem solving: wedding theory to data in public service. After all, theory building eventually becomes an arid and futile enterprise without application. And governmental response, unguided by empirically tested theory, is reduced to rule by maxim and standard operating procedure. Neither is a satisfactory outcome. Thus faculty and student involvement in the practical dilemmas of governance and public professional input into the questions that stimulate curriculum development cannot help but enrich each endeavor.

Third, governmental professionalization implies more than the education of young adults for careers in the public sector. Is there some sacred reason why education stops at 22 or 23 or 24 years of age? Life-long learning is more than this year's cliché from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. It is more than the thinly veiled self-interest of universities trying to frustrate the ravages of demography on enrollments. If universities take their public service missions seriously, then innovative educational programs that address life-long learning coupled with true civic outreach must become higher priorities. Serving the communities that surround us becomes a task that extends the meaning of teaching and research and, perhaps, returns the meaning of teaching and research to something that Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas and Machiavelli would recognize.

Fourth, the results of these commingled efforts will have several beneficial outcomes. To the degree that cooperation breeds innovative success—and I am confident that it will—trust will begin to return to the public sector and faith will be rekindled in the educational process. When theory is tempered by reality, then the self-appointed guardians of "truth" whose actions freeze debate—the very source of academic freedom and sustenance of intellectual growth—will be revealed for the philistines that they are and dismissed accordingly. And, where policy proposals match the dimensions of public demands affordably, the need for micro-management disappears.

These four ideas succeed best when nurtured in a professional association. Why? Because a professional association is neutral turf. The views expressed, the solutions offered, even the company kept challenge no entrenched interests in government or in academe. Consequently, people feel less encumbered and, perhaps, more entrepreneurial. They may be willing to risk more in an unthreatening setting. That is what must be encouraged.

David Halberstam criticized the Kennedy administration for blithely attempting to assemble the "best and the brightest" and, in a spirit of

noblesse oblige, resolve the problems of that era. My characterization of professional associations should not be confused with his cogent critique. Professional associations are not panaceas. They *are* opportunities, however. Conscientious professionals, sharing a common disciplinary identity, who come together in mutual respect to compare ideas and grapple with common problems of scarcity and responsiveness bestow a commitment on their enterprise. It is the grit of hard work, not the glamour of casual play that animates work groups in professional associations. The hubris and naivete that Halberstam condemned are foreign to the environment I am describing.

Members of state political science associations have a singular opportunity to shape the discipline and the expectations of its practitioners in government and on campuses in their states. They are front line socializers of new entrants into the profession. They are the first links in the public policy chain. How they conduct their business sends a message to professionals across the state and sets an example for their peers throughout the region and the nation. To those of you in the southern region, I pledge the help and resources of the Southern Political Science Association in these tasks. With that I invite you to join me in "the best of times."

Note

1. This article is based on an address delivered to the Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Political Science Association in Oxford, Mississippi, on February 15, 1991.

Midwest Political Science Association Announces Officers and Award Winners

The following political scientists were elected to officer and council positions at the annual meeting of the MPSA on April 19, 1991:

President: Charles O. Jones, University of Wisconsin

President-elect: Susan Welch, Pennsylvania State University

Vice-President (1991-93): Benjamin Page, Northwestern University

Council (1991-94): Ted Carmines, Indiana University; Allan Monroe, Illinois State University; Patricia Bayer Richard, Ohio University; Russell Dalton, University of California, Irvine; Barbara L. Graham, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Council '92 vacancy: Gregory Caldeira, Ohio State University

Nominations for 1993 elections of a President-elect, Vice-President, and five council members may be submitted to the Nominating Committee recently appointed by MPSA President Charles O. Jones: Dianne Pinderhughes, University of Illinois, Urbana (Chairperson); Darrell West, Brown University; and Robert Albritton, Northern Illinois University. Nominations should be submitted by January 1, 1992.

Three awards were presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association for the best papers presented at the 1990 MPSA meeting. The awards, recipients, and committees follow:

Pi Sigma Alpha Award: A \$200 award for the best paper delivered at the 1990 convention.

Recipient: B. Dan Wood, "Modeling Federal Policy Structures with Dynamic Structural Equations."

Committee: Greg Caldeira, Ohio State University (Chairperson); Lyn Ragsdale, University of Arizona; Neil Richardson, University of Wisconsin.

Brooks/Cole Award: A \$100 award for the best paper written by a graduate student at the 1990 convention.

Recipient: Jeffrey J. Mondak, Indiana University, "Institution Legitimacy, Policy Legitimacy, and the Supreme Court."

Committee: Donley Studlar, Oklahoma State University (Chairperson); Margery Ambrosius, Kansas State University; Clyde Wilcox, Georgetown University.

Sophonisba Breckenridge Award: A \$100 award for the best paper about women and politics at the 1990 convention.

Recipient: Daniela Gobetti, "Goods of the Mind, Goods of the Body, and External Goods."

Committee: Virginia Sapiro, Uni-

versity of Wisconsin (Chairperson); Barbara Allen, Carleton College; John Shockley, Western Illinois University.

See "Upcoming Conferences" in this issue of *NS* for details on the 1992 Annual Meeting.

New England Association Elects Officers and Presents Awards

The New England Political Science Association (NEPSA) had its annual meeting in Worcester, Massachusetts, on April 12-13, 1991. Incoming officers for the association include President Garrison Nelson, University of Vermont; President-Elect Deborah Miner, Simmons College; Vice-President Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., Harvard University; and Secretary-Treasurer Irving Fisher, University of Southern Maine. New members of the NEPSA's Executive Council are Pamela Blake of Colby College, the 1991 Program Chair; Walker Connor, Trinity College; Wilbur Rich, Wellesley College; and Paul Watanabe of the University of Massachusetts-Boston. They join current Executive Council members Diana Evans, Trinity College; Kenneth Hayes, University of Maine; Frederick P. Lewis, University of Lowell; and C. Ernesto Zirakzadeh of the University of Connecticut.

The winner of the John C. Donovan Prize for best paper at the 1990 Meeting was David Dickson of Northeastern University for his paper, "Lobby and Ethnic Group Variables and the Congressional Foreign Policy Process: An Appraisal of Jewish-American, Arab-American and African American Lobby Groups," and the Donovan Prize winner for the best paper by a graduate student was Anthony Corrado, Colby College, for his paper, "The Pre-Campaign Campaign: The Role of PACs in Presidential Nominations Contests."

The 1992 Annual Meeting will be held in Providence, Rhode Island. Inquiries regarding the 1992 Meeting may be addressed to Garrison Nelson, Department of Political Science, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405; or to Eileen

McDonagh, the 1992 Program Chair, Murray Research Center, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Western Political Science Association Selects Officers

Barbara Sinclair, University of California, Riverside, was elected Vice President of the Western Political Science Association at the annual meeting in Seattle, March 21-23, 1991. She will serve as program chair for the 1992 meeting and then as president in 1992-93.

Randolph M. Siverson, University of California, Davis, who served as vice president and program chair the past year, became president for 1991-92 at the conclusion of the Seattle meeting, succeeding Anne Schneider, Arizona State University.

Three new members were elected to three-year terms on the Executive Council: Nancy Hartsock, University of Washington; Byron Jackson, California State University, Los Angeles; and Benjamin Marquez, University of Utah. Persons continuing on the council include: Dianne Long, California Polytechnic Institute, San Luis Obispo; Paula McClain, Arizona State University; Gary Moncrief, Boise State University; Herman Lujan, University of Washington; Gary Magleby, Brigham Young University; and Carole Jean Uhlaner, University of California, Irvine. The secretary-treasurer is Elizabeth F. Moulds, California State University, Sacramento. Ex-officio members of the council are Anne Schneider, past president; Dean E. Mann, editor, *Western Political Quarterly*; and Walter Stone, incoming editor, *Western Political Quarterly*.

The 1992 meeting of the Association is scheduled for March 19-21, 1992, at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, San Francisco, California. The host institution is San Francisco State University.

Persons interested in presenting papers, chairing panels, or serving as discussants should contact the appropriate Section Chair. If unclear about which Section is appropriate, contact the Program Chair. (See section descriptions in "Upcoming Conferences" in this issue of *PS*.)